

# Reviews

PAUL A. BOGAARD AND JASON BELL, EDITORS

**The Edinburgh Critical Edition of the Complete Works of Alfred North Whitehead, Volume I: The Harvard Lectures of Alfred North Whitehead, 1924–1925—Philosophical Presuppositions of Science**

Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017.

In 1926, John Dewey called Alfred North Whitehead's book *Science and the Modern World* "the most significant restatement for the general reader of the present relations of science, philosophy and the issues of life which has yet appeared." While within Pragmatism, such praise by Dewey was praise indeed, Whitehead's influence on the philosophical debate waned quickly after his death in 1947, owed mainly to the fact that we had a better text of Plato's *Republic* than of his magnum opus, *Process and Reality*, as was often quipped.

In 1978, Donald Sherburne and David Griffin published the Corrected Edition of *Process and Reality*, a major achievement of scholarship. And indeed—the Corrected Edition has become a cornerstone for the revival of Whitehead's process thought soon afterwards by what came to be known as Process Theology, the inauguration of the Whitehead Research Project, and vivid research activity by a vibrant international community. Today, the *10th International Whitehead Conference* in Claremont attracts almost 1000 presenters from over 30 countries, many of whom consider Whitehead a relevant voice not only in contemporary philosophical discussion, but also in the context of larger ecological and ethical debates as well as contributions to scientific theory.

It is against this background of increasing relevance in a broadening scientific field that Edinburgh University Press has started to publish *The Edinburgh Critical Edition of the Complete Works of Alfred North Whitehead*. The ambitious plan of the Critical Edition is to release the entire textual corpus of Alfred North Whitehead, including personal letters and transcripts of his Harvard Lectures, much of which have

never been published before. In a contemporary scientific environment of Whitehead scholarship that widens its horizon, the Critical Edition intends to provide the comprehensive foundation all future studies can be based upon, thereby providing the same qualitative impulse for research as the Corrected Edition of *Process and Reality* did in 1978.

This year, the Critical Edition commenced with its first volume, *The Harvard Lectures of Alfred North Whitehead, 1924–1925—Philosophical Presuppositions of Science*, edited by Paul A. Bogaard and Jason Bell. As the title suggests, the series starts out slowly with transcripts of Whitehead's Harvard lectures. The second and third volume will comprise transcripts of his lectures as well, followed by a volume on Whitehead's personal letters. It will be some time before the Critical Edition is going to publish his main philosophical works that will form the scientific backbone of the edition. This leaves the first volume in a peculiar situation. As transcripts of his lectures cannot form the solid foundation for a detailed examination of Whitehead's close-knit cosmology, the volume has to attain philosophical relevance in a more scholarly way—*The Harvard Lectures of Alfred North Whitehead* are not about Whitehead's philosophy, but about the context of its development.

Ab initio, it seems the editors had a clear understanding of these special circumstances. Although the volume consists of 570 pages, it does not have any longueurs. Much to the contrary, the introduction, while comprising 45 pages, manages to give a concise overview over the series and contains an essential description of the Critical Edition's editorial principles as well as introductions to Alfred North Whitehead's biography, his published works and his Harvard Lectures 1924–1925. The fact that the editorial work on the transcripts of Whitehead's lectures forms the core of the volume is never in danger of being obfuscated by erudite detours.

Complementary to the crisp introduction, the lucid structure of the main text allows for good accessibility of a complicated and frayed field. One of the most important editorial decisions concerns the ordering of the material. There are three sources for transcripts of Whitehead's lectures in 1924–1925. Winthrop Pickard Bell and William Ernest Hocking covered the 'Emerson Hall lectures' on the topic of 'Philosophical Presuppositions of Science', while Louise R. Heath took notes in the 'Radcliffe College lectures' Whitehead gave there during the same time on the same topic. To complicate matters even further, the 'Philosophical Presuppositions of Science' were spread across two semesters, and another course, 'Seminary in Metaphysics', can solely be reconstructed from the sparse notes of Hocking, who, for unknown reasons, covered only four meetings. Against this background of confusing source material, the editors concluded to order the presentation first by lectures and then by note-taker. This allows the reader to

contrast the notes of Bell and Hocking with each other and find out in detailed comparison whether they agree on particular items or provide conflicting accounts. Since transcripts of a lecture can hardly be expected to be scientifically exact, a legitimate way of reading this book is to reduce transcription errors by cross-referencing the three sources as thoroughly as possible. The presentation of the volume accentuates the different characters of the transcripts: Bell is shown to be a very detailed note-taker, complementing his verbose accounts with numerous sketches copied from the blackboard; the density of his transcript betrays a remarkable attention. Hocking's notes are detailed as well, but considerable shorter. His drawing of Whitehead in the notes to lecture 74 was used by Lewis Ford for the cover of his book, *The Emergence of Whitehead's Metaphysics*. Louise Heath's account is one continuous transcript, thereby making it difficult to distinguish the break between two lectures. Nevertheless, she appears to have been a diligent note-taker as well.

Since the scientific value of transcripts of Whitehead's early lectures emerges from fine-grained comparisons between the different sources, it is helpful to look at more minute decisions in order to appreciate the quality of the editorial work done on this volume. As it shows, one of the most obvious features of Whitehead's lecturing method is his extensive use of blackboard drawings, a legacy of his past as a mathematician. Curiously, apart from two images in the infamous fourth part of *Process and Reality*, Whitehead's philosophical oeuvre does not use any illustrations. Therefore, seeing in the transcripts how much Whitehead relied on diagrams and explanatory models of physics in his early lectures in order to elaborate positions he would very soon after develop philosophically in *Science and the Modern World* is an important contribution to contemporary research. It also forced a tough editorial decision: While it is perfectly reasonable to typeset handwritten transcripts, it would be much more difficult to reproduce the many illustrations contained therein without being unduly interpretative in the process. The editors chose to scan and reproduce the original drawings consistently throughout, which overall turns out to be a sensible decision. Together with the replication of crossed out and underlined words, this leads to a very faithful—if sometimes convoluted—rendition of the transcripts. What elevates this volume above mere editorial work and justifies the aspirations of a Critical Edition, however, is the extensive system of annotations that provides thoroughly researched context to every minute aspect from the casual German term to subsequent literature throughout. An exhaustive index of 32 pages completes the editorial work. It is this welter of background information that makes *The Harvard Lectures of Alfred North Whitehead* a veritable achievement of scholarship.

As such, every Whitehead scholar will welcome this expansion of source material on Whitehead's philosophical scheme. However, thus far *The Harvard Lectures of Alfred North Whitehead* mainly cater to the completionist streak that is a necessary part of sound research. Beyond this aspect, the volume also offers genuinely new insight into the philosophy of Whitehead. Its focus is on the part of Whitehead's thought that is concerned with philosophy of science. Since Victor Lowe, a prevalent and convenient approach to Whitehead has been to assume that he started out with philosophy of science—and, as he calls himself in *Concept of Nature*, a *Naturphilosoph*—, moved on to his full-blown system of metaphysics in *Process and Reality* and closed off his philosophy with rather general musings on civilisation and aesthetics. This view, most prominently taken by Lewis Ford, who attempts to show different, distinguishable phases in Whitehead's thought, assumes that there is an implicit development in Whitehead's philosophical outlook. The scientific merit of this book lies in its provision of ample evidence for the broad range of interests Whitehead's Harvard lectures display. As the transcripts show in lucid detail, he regularly complemented his analysis of modern sciences with historical detours, going back to Newton and Galilei, and even more so to Plato and Aristotle, who he regards as an ideal-typical opposition. Sometimes, the transcripts also record jokes Whitehead used to interpose his lectures with. In hindsight, he obviously had already begun to use a mixture of what in *Process and Reality* would become the two modes of genetic and coordinate analysis in his early philosophical lectures. His frequent allusions to poetry, art and value do not only foreshadow the famous chapter "The Romantic Reaction" in *Science and the Modern World*, but also actually prefigure the more wholesome perspective taken up much later in *Adventures of Ideas* and *Modes of Thought*. In all their facets, the transcripts show Whitehead in his early days at Harvard as an original thinker tightly embedded in the scientific discourses of his time.

*The Harvard Lectures of Alfred North Whitehead* merits critical acclaim in two areas. Its commitment to the editorial handling of the transcripts is consistent and thorough, which is a true mark of scholarship. On the part of scientific relevance, it provides context to the diverse lines of thought of a highly nuanced thinker whose interdisciplinary background is difficult to understand otherwise. As the first publication of the Critical Edition, this volume will determine appearance and design of the entire series to a fair extent. The justification of some design choices will only show in subsequent publications; for example, the decision to typeset the main text in Cambria makes for a faint reminiscence to a Word document. In general, this start bodes well for what is to come. The *Critical Edition of The Complete Works of Alfred North Whitehead* by Edinburgh University Press is available in

hardback as well as in digital form and is set to become the staple of research for all future studies on this topic.

Aljoscha Berve  
Universität Düsseldorf  
*aljoscha.berve@hhu.de*



DINDA L. GORLÉE

**From Translation to Transduction: The Glassy Essence of Intersemiosis**

Tartu: University of Tartu Press, 2015.

DOUGLAS ROBINSON

**Semiotranslating Peirce**

Tartu: University of Tartu Press, 2016.

It makes sense to review these two books together since they both address the concept of *semiotranslation*, Dinda L. Gorlée extending her previous writings on the subject by adding intermedial intertextuality argued as ‘transduction’, and Douglas Robinson subjecting semiotranslation to a sustained critique before offering his own *icotic* position.

In agreement with her previous publications, Gorlée rejects any notion of translation as a simple substitution of linguistic expressions. Instead, the translation process and its results are seen as non-symmetrical, forever changing over time and between cultures. ‘Translation’ now encompasses a broad spectrum of transformations from intralingual paraphrase to *intermedial transduction*. At the level of *transduction*, the author brings semiotranslation up to date by applying the concept to intertextuality amongst nonverbal works of art. Nonetheless, even if different media generate different relations between original and its translation, the target text will always be a ‘rediscovery of the source text’. (68) At the same time, Gorlée views all forms of translation as manifestations of *transculturation*. In arguing for her concept of transduction, she leaves behind the traditional conceptions of translation as semantic equivalence and linear progression from source to target text as fallacious. Furthermore, in intermedial transduction, equivalence is ruled out by the principle of the non-equivalence of intertextual relations.

In her discussion of the relations between verbal and non-verbal signs, Gorlée *seems* to imply, at least to this reader, that we could also take the opposite route, that is, returning from intermediality to the theorization of language itself by way of a radically transductive